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# VALOUR AND TREACHERY

By

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## Valour and Treachery

*"Sham Singh died nobly in battle as a brave and gallant soldier. Where as the battle of Sabraon is a saga of Tej Singh's treachery, it is also a fete of valour and of magnificent Courage on the part of Sham Singh." He remained unaffected by the ocean of treachery that surrounded him. Indeed he proved himself "a prince among princes." Tej Singh is a striking study in treachery. "Two more contemptible potroons than the two generals of the Khalsa army—Lal Singh and Tej Singh, both Brahmans—never breathed."*

*India was saved for the British by the treachery of one person Tej Singh. He was the major cause of the Lahore Army's defeat and the consequent down-fall of the Panjab kingdom.*

*"He was not a son of the Panjab, he was neither loyal to her nor to his masters. He was a foreign adventurer. With his home and near relations in the British dominions at Ekri, in the parganna of Sardhana, in Meerut district, he easily became a tool in the hands of the British.....he was ready to do anything for the glittering gold.*

*It was due to his planned treachery that the British escaped a disaster at Ferozeshahr and were able to win the final victory at Sabraon."*

## VALOUR AND TREACHERY

### I—THE TWO OPPOSITES

**Sham Singh Attariwala**

A traveller along the grand trunk road between Amritsar and the Indo-Pakistan border when about four to five kilometers short of the border, comes across a few tall buildings in a small village called Attari, hemmed in between the road and the railway line both of which once ran through without interruption between Amritsar and Lahore. An inquisitive traveller going towards the tall mansions, but before entering the village, finds a huge **Smadh**-like building on the northeast corner of the village. Too here lie the remains of a famous General, to whom belong the tall mansions. This was the famous General Sham Singh Attariwala, "A prince among patriots," who died at Sabraon fighting for the honour of his homeland—The Punjab.

Most of the efficient, loyal and dependable generals of Maharaja Ranjit Singh had died during his life time; the number of such generals left behind, after his death, was very small and **Sardar Sham Singh Attariwala** was one of these rare ones.

General Sham Singh's grandfather, **Gour Singh**, a Sidhu jat, came from Kaunke a village in the present

district of Ludhiana. (1) Gour Singh took service under Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh Bhangi and settled at a "Tibba" where he built an "attari" which gave the family and the village its name. On the death of Gurbakhsh Singh, Gour Singh joined the service of Gujjar Singh and Lehna Singh the two Bhangi Sardars. Gour Singh died in 1763, and his son Nihal Singh continued serving under Sahib Singh son of Gujjar Singh. During the battle of Bhasin, Nihal Singh, who was with Sahib Singh, was suggested by Ranjit Singh to join the latter, but Nihal Singh refused to desert the Bhangis. Nihal Singh rising star had created jealousies among his cousins who started poisoning Sahib Singh's ears. A time came when these intrigues bore fruit. Sahib Singh got annoyed with Nihal Singh and confiscated his jagir worth Rs. 15,000. Nihal Singh; disgusted, left the Bhangi Sardar and retired to Attari. Once again, Ranjit Singh offered service to Nihal Singh, this time the latter accepted the offer and became the first of the Attari family to join the Maharaja's service. He became a great favourite of the Maharaja. He was a very courageous leader, and took distinguished part in almost all the expeditions launched by the Maharaja between 1801 and 1817. For example, he took part in the first Kashmir Campaign; he was present at the battles of Pind Dadan Khan, Kask, Pakpattan, Dolar, Nila, Hola, Chakwal, Saidpur, Naraingarh and Multan. During the battle of Multan in 1810, he along with others was

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(1) This family claims Rajput origin which had emigrated from Jaisalmer. (The Panjab Chiefs, Griffin, P.59.)

wounded by the bursting of a mine, and was brought to Lahore for treatment. He died in January 1818 leaving behind a jagir worth Rs. 3,05,800. But the well known personality of this family was Sardar Sham Singh, one of the greatest Panjabis who, to save the Panjab's honour sacrificed all his worldly benefit and personal comforts; who preferred death to thralldom and set personal example to prove that nothing was more precious than freedom.

There is no information available about his date of birth nor is much known of his life prior to his joining the Lahore service in 1805. During his employment, under the Maharaja, the Sardar had taken part in many campaigns and, like his father, had distinguished himself. But, he is famous for his devotion and gallantry depicted during the First Anglo-Sikh War in which he died fighting.

After the Maharaja's death there was no strong man left to handle the State affairs. Kings came and went; **Wazirs** were assassinated one after the other. Jawahar Singh, the real brother of Maharani Jind Kaur, was the wazir to meet this fate. Sardar Sham Singh abhorred all this, and abstained from taking part in any of the intrigues. He wanted to be away from all this blood-shed wherein his own son-in-law had also been killed. So, with the excuse of celebrating his son, Kahn Singh's marriage he went to his **jagir** of Kakrala lying on the east of the Satluj. Shortly after this marriage, when the First Anglo-Sikh war was in the offing, he had come back to Attari to live in retirement. Although he had denounced

the war, but it was to no avail; he saw with disgust and sorrow the Sikh army marching to destruction under the guidance of false and incompetent men and he resolved to stand himself aloof.

The First Anglo-Sikh War, thrust upon the Sikhs by the British, broke out in 1843. The army fought like lions but had to face defeat on account of the treachery of their commanders such as Tej Singh and Lall Singh, who had secret understandings with the British.

### **Tej Singh**

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army was not composed of Sikhs only. It had in its rank and file as well as among the top leadership people from all classes and religions. It was composed of Sikhs, Panjabi Musalmans, Afghans, Dogras, Gorkhas, Khatris, Rajputs, Brahmins and others. Upstart Tej Singh, one of the architects of the downfall of the kingdom of the Panjab, was a Poorbia Brahmin and was the nephew of Jamadar Khushal Singh. He was the son of Nidha, a Gour Brahmin shopkeeper of Ekri in the Sardhana pargana of Meerut district, and had come to Lahore in search of livelihood. This soldier of fortune found employment in the service of the Kingdom of Lahore in 1811 at the age of twelve. During the 1814 campaign of Kashmir, Tej Singh attended on the Maharaja. In 1816 under the influence of his uncle, he took pahul and became a full fledged Sikh.

During the Maharaja's life-time Tej Singh had participated in a number of campaigns. Initially, he had

participated as a subordinate commander, and was, later, raised to the rank of a divisional commander. But, during the Maharaja's lifetime he was never given an independent command of a major campaign.

In 1819, he accompanied Mistr Diwan Chand on the expedition to Kashmir. Two years later he took part in many expeditions on the frontier including the Teri campaign. He commanded a division in the campaign for Mankera, Leiah, D.I. Khan, and also in 1823 in the battle of Naoshehra where he was located on the northern bank of the Landai River.

In 1831, Tej Singh was in command of a camp of infantry of twenty two regular battalions. This extensive command, combined with his relationship with the important person of Jamadar Khushal Singh in the Lahore Darbar, rendered Tej Singh a great influence.

In 1835, he participated in the bloodless victory won by the Maharaja against Dost Muhammad near Peshawar. In 1837, when General Hari Singh Nalwa was killed in the battle of Jamrod, Tej Singh temporarily succeeded him as Governor of Peshawar, but was soon relieved by Avitabile. In November the same year, Painda Khan created disturbances in Hazara and captured the fort of Chandoo. Tej Singh was ordered to deal with the rebel, and, in order to maintain an effective control over the area, to build a fort at Salingarh. By January 1838, Tej Singh was able to bring Painda Khan to his knees and also establish control over the area. Also, he constructed a strong fort

at Gumti on the river bank and about three kilometers from Darband; the shot of a Persian gun fired from this fort could reach Amb. In July, on orders from the capital he left a company for thanedar of the fort at Harkishangarh and himself departed for Lahore. Tej Singh being the highest bidder, Hazara was granted to him in lease for payment of Rs. 36,000.

In 1843, when Avitabile found it difficult to control the affairs, he was relieved by Tej Singh. From there he returned to Lahore in 1845, and engaged himself in his nefarious activities.

This Poorbia family had baleful influence on the Maharaja which the latter could not shake off. Tej Singh, who had occupied a position of importance even during the life-time of the Maharaja, was one of the courtiers detailed to receive visiting dignitaries to Lahore. For example, when Burnes visited Lahore, Tej Singh was deputed to receive the visitor and bring him to the Maharaja's camp safe from the Akalis. Earlier, he had been ordered to build bungalows for the travellers' stay at various places and their cost to be debited to the Lahore ruler's account. He was present at the Ropar meeting (1831) between the Lahore monarch and the British Governor General in India, and was one of the recipients of presents from the Governor General. Again, in 1838, he had accompanied the Maharaja during the latter's meeting with the Governor General Ferozepore. When, once the Maharaja was annoyed with Sardar Sham Singh Attariwala, it was Tej Singh who was sent to demolish the Sardar's



fort near Pasrur and also to recover from the latter a **nazrana** worth Rs. 16,000.

The Maharaja had showered Jagirs and titles on this family too. Tej Singh held the titles of **Ujjal Didar, Nirmal Budh, Sardar-i-bawaqar, General-i-Awwal, Sardar Jang Bahadur, Mubarazul-Mulak** and **Sams-ud-daula**.

In November 1845, when Lal Singh was nominated **wazir**, Tej Singh was re-confirmed in his office of **Commander-in-Chief**. Thus, the two leading traitors came to the helm of the affairs of Lahore Darbar. After the death of the Maharaj, Tej Singh's share in the political intrigues preceding the First Sikh war was enormous. Although he was one of the influential personalities of the Maharaja, he is better known for his notoriety in these affairs.

## **II—THE BATTLE OF FERORESHAH**

### **Background**

After the death of the Maharaja, it became, difficult for persons like Lal Singh and Tej Singh, who were then at the helm of the Lahore Darbar affairs, to control the army. They were afraid of the changes that had taken place in the Sikh Army. The consequences of such a state of affairs had been correctly anticipated by Sir Henry Hardinge who, on 30th September 1845, wrote to the authorities in England:— "Their (Chiefs) personal interests endangered by the democratic revolution so successfully accomplished by the Sikh Army, may induce those Chiefs to exert all their efforts to compel the British Government to interfere;

but these attempts and any danger resulting from them will be attributable, not to our forbearance but to their personal fears for life and property.”(2) These Chiefs were Tej Singh and Lal Singh; they urged the army to war, when the latter declared they desired peace.

Further, on 4th December, 1845, Lord Hardinge wrote from Ambala to the Secret Committee that these “Sardars are becoming more and more urgent that the Army should advance to the frontier, believing that in the present posture of affairs the only hope of saving their lives and prolonging their power is to be found in bringing about a collision with the British forces.” He also observed that “The Sikh Army moves with evident reluctance.” His previous impressions remained unaltered and it was evident to him that the Chiefs were, for their own preservation, endeavouring to raise a storm.

According to Malleson, (3) who also supports this view, there was reason to believe, indeed, that Lal Singh and Tej Singh had begun to nurture the idea that if they failed to master those peaceful soldiers it would be a wise policy to throw them on the bayonets of the British. With this aim in view, both of them started correspondence with the British and acted as their spies in the Lahore Darbar. One cannot help suspecting that these men were planted at Lahore by the British. Cunningham writes:

“These men considered that their only chance of

(2) The first and Second Sikh war, Burton, P. 12.

(3) The Decisive Battle of India.

retaining power was to have the army removed by inducing it to engage in a contest which they believed would end in its dispersion, and pave the way for their recognition as ministers more surely than if they did their duty by the people, and earnestly deprecated a war which must destroy the independence of the Panjab. Had the shrewd committees of the armies observed no military preparations on the part of the English, they would not have heeded the insidious exhortations of such mercenary men as Lal Singh and Tej Singh, although in former days they would have marched uninquiringly towards Delhi at the bidding of their great Maharaja. But the views of the government functionaries coincided with the belief of the impulsive soldiery; and when the men were tauntingly asked whether they would quietly look on while the limits of the Khalsa dominion were being reduced, and the plains of Lahore occupied by the remote strangers of Europe, they answered that they would defend with their lives all belonging to the common wealth of Gobind, and that they would march and give battle to the invaders on their own ground." (1)

### **The Battle**

With this background, both Lal Singh and Tej Singh at the head of about 50,000 strong army and with 100 guns crossed the Satluj on 11th December, 1845, and took up position at Ferozeshah, a village about fifteen kilometers east of Ferozepore. They did nothing to deal with the

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4. History of the Sikhs, Cunningham, PP. 257-258.

isolated and weak garrison at Ferozepore, which could have been wiped out without much effort. On the other hand, this period of inactivity on the part of these Sikh generals gave enough time to the enemy to enable them to concentrate their forces. The British forces at Ambala and Ludhiana had commenced their march towards Mudhki on 13th December reaching there on the 18th in a State of exhaustion due to the rapid and long marches, dust and lack of water. This exhausted force could have been easily defeated had the Lahore troops advanced towards them in force. (3) Instead, they sent forward only a small portion of the force, whose advance was checked at Mudhki by the British cavalry. After a heartless effort the detachment retired to the main position at Ferozshah. On 19th December, the enemy received reinforcements bringing their strength to 16,700 men and guns. Thus reinforced, the British, on 21st December, started their advance towards Ferozeshah; Littler with his division advanced from Ferozepore.

The battle was joined at 4 p.m. the same day. Littler's Division attacked the Sikh right flank; it was repulsed with heavy losses to the enemy. Next the enemy attacked the left flank of the Sikhs. The enemy's central division also joined the attack. However at night the British

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5. "Such were the counsels of commonsense. But the Sikh army under the baneful influence of the leaders who were bent upon its destruction had no regard for such counsels." (*The Decisive Battles of India*, Malleon, P. 356.)

force had to withdraw into their bivouacs; the native troops with the British were much "disheartened and unnerved". There were counsels for retreating to Ferozepur.

On 22nd December, fighting was renewed. While this battle, which resulted in the defeat of the Sikhs, was going on, Tej Singh with 30,000 men was sitting idle. May be he was watching the fireworks. He came into action two hours after the fall of Ferozeshah, made a demonstration against the enemy and without giving any real fight left the field. The Sikh army withdrew across the Satluj. Both at Mudhki and Ferzoshah, where all the factors such as ground, weather and the state of the forces, were in their favour, a concentrated attack would have won the Sikhs these battles; but Tej Singh ensured that such a concentration did not materialize. He purposely remained inactive and the battle resulted in defeat for the Sikh army.

Tej Singh's cowardice and treachery during the First Anglo-Sikh War was too obvious. He has rightly been condemned for his conduct during this war for showing lack of moral courage and letting down the Panjab Army resulting in its defeat when they had nearly won the war. One cannot agree with Griffin who, to condon the actions of this traitor, argues that "the temper of the Sikh Army was so suspicious, and the circumstances under which he held command were so difficult, that those who have most carefully examined the action of Tej Singh at the time are inclined to acquit him of anything beyond vacillation and weakness."<sup>(6)</sup> Sir Herbert Edwardes' comments on the con-

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(6) Ranjit Singh, Iepel Griffin, P 125.

duct of Tej Singh were "To what the army of the Satluj are indebted for this deliverance; whether to cowardice, treachery or ignorance on the enemy's part of the British numbers, or whether, after all, Tej Singh's whole object was a chivalrous wish to cover his friend's retreat remains to be guessed and wondered at, but we fear not to be satisfactorily decided." Commenting on this, Malleon writes "We may dismiss at once the last supposition, that regarding the chivalrous wish, for British were not pursuing. cowardice can scarcely have been seriously suggested; nor can ignorance of the British numbers be pleaded with better grace. There is only one possible solution, and that is the solution adopted in the text. The object of Tej Singh was to destroy the Khalsa army, and then to claim credit with the British for having destroyed it. He succeeded in both objects." (?)

The base intentions of Lal Singh and Tej Singh are clear from what Cunningham wrote :

"The Sikh leaders threatened Ferozepore, but no attack was made upon its seven thousand defenders, which with a proper spirit were led out by their commander, Sir John Littler, and showed a bold front to the overwhelming force of the enemy. The object, indeed, of Lal Singh and Tej Singh was not to compromise themselves with the English by destroying an isolated division, but to get their own troops dispersed by the converging forces of their opponents. Their desire was to be upheld as the ministers of a dependent kingdom

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7. The Decision Battle of India, Malleon, P. 364.

by grateful conquerors, and they thus deprecated an attack on Ferozepore, and assured the local British authorities of their secret and efficient good will. But these men had also to keep up an appearance of devotion to the interests of their country, and they urged the necessity of leaving the easy prey of a cantonment untouched, until the leaders of the English should be attacked, and the fame of the Khalsa exalted by the captivity or death of a Governor-General. The Sikh army itself understood the necessity of unity of counsel in the affairs of war, and the power of the regimental and other committees was temporarily suspended by an agreement with the executive heads of the state, which enabled these unworthy men to effect their base objects with comparative ease. Nevertheless, in the ordinary military arrangements of occupying positions and distributing infantry and cavalry, the generals and inferior commanders acted for themselves, and all had to pay some respect to the spirit which animated the private soldiers in their readiness to do battle for the commonwealth of Gobind. The effects of this enthusiastic unity of purpose in an army, headed by men not only ignorant of warfare, but studiously treacherous towards their followers, was conspicuously visible in the speediness with which numerous heavy guns and abundance of grain and ammunition were brought across a large river.”<sup>(8)</sup>

It was well known that Lal Singh was in communication

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8. History of the Sikhs. Cunningham, P.P. 263-264

with Captain Nicolson, the British Agent at Ferozepore. But due to the untimely death of Nicolson, the details of the overtures made, and expectations held out, could not be gathered. (Lal Singh, again, is reputed to have sent a plan of the Sikh positions at Sabraon to Colonel Lawrence.) And as for Tej Singh, according to a reliable tradition, he had "tempered" with the artillery ammunition and rendered it useless before the operations. But, through malicious propaganda he had tried to put the blame, for this sabotage, on Maharani Jind Kaur who was absolutely ignorant of this treachery.

The battle of Ferozeshah is a glaring example of Tej Singh's treachery. The combined forces of Ambala and Ludhiana divisions and the divisions of Sir John Littler attacked the Sikhs on the evening of 21st December, 1845. The resistance met was wholly unexpected, and the enemy were startled with astonishment. The state of the British army after some fighting was deplorable and, according to Cunningham, "on that memorable night the English were hardly masters of the ground on which they stood." The fighting went on the whole night and also the next morning. The reserves (the second wing of the Khalsa army consisting of 30,000 horse, fresh battalions and a large part of artillery) were under Tej Singh. (9) When

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9. Compare this with the Battle of Plassey (23rd June 1757), between the English and Siraj-ud-daula, Nawab of Bengal, where Mir Jafar (a traitor like Tej Singh) was in command of the major portion of the Nawab's army, "and never properly came into action". This was the first decisive victory in India, won by the British by treachery, and subsequently so commonly practised by them in conquering the sub-continent.



it approached in battle-array the wearied and famished English saw before them "a desperate and, perhaps useless struggle." This was the crucial moment when the reserves should have been employed; on 22nd December, had Tej Singh attacked, the British could never have survived the onset of the thirty thousand fresh troops. But the Sikh commander hesitated and acted according to what had previously been arranged with the enemy. He did not intend to spoil the plans of British. <sup>(10)</sup> At eleven o'clock Tej Singh opened fire on the left flank of the enemy's position and again hesitated. Four hours later, he threatened an attack on the British right flank; but to the utter astonishment and intense satisfaction of the weary defenders, his whole force was seen turn suddenly northwards and move off rapidly in the direction taken by the vanquished battalions of Lal Singh. <sup>(11)</sup> Tej Singh's intentions were to give time to the adversary to rally round their standards, so that the enemy could overcome and put to flight the Khalsa army. Even at the last moment, when the artillery ammunition of the English had failed, when a portion of their force was retiring upon Ferozepore, and when no exertions could have prevented the remainder from retreating likewise, instead of boldly pressing forward, and

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10. According to the entry of 22nd December, 1845, in the diary of Robert Cust, in charge of the records of the Agency, the British "affairs were so desperate, that all state papers were to be destroyed,... and we were concerting measures to make an unconditional surrender..." (Linguistic and Oriental Essays, VI, P. 48. Road footnote '11' at page 16

putting in a resolute attack, Tej Singh merely skirmished and made feints; and shortly afterwards he precipitately fled, leaving his subordinates without orders & without an object.

The brave and untutored warriors were led by generals who were betraying them; had they only known it, they would have won a victory. They had repulsed the British attack. They had driven back Littler, forced Smith to retire, compelled even Gilbert to evacuate the position he had gained, and thrown the whole British army into disorder. The large force under Tej Singh, watching Ferozepore, remained unengaged. What the Sikhs needed at this moment was a guiding mind to direct the movements of Sikh army

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11. Writing in the same context, Major Smith says : "At this moment Sardar Tej Singh, with some twenty-five or thirty thousand fresh troops, arrived from the camp at Ferozepore, and presented himself before the British force, which, tired and exhausted with its previous exertions, was unable to attack him, and would, in all likelihood, have been found unable to repel a vigorous assault from an army of fresh men, in overpowering number, like that led by him. The usual good fortune of the British prevailed however, and instead of seeing the Seik (Sikh) reserve advance to the attack, they had the satisfaction of beholding them turn back without firing a shot and follow their defeated comrades towards the Satluj. The British force was thus left in undisputed possession of the field of Ferozeshahar, with the entrenched camp of the Seiks and all their artillery." (A History of the Reigning Family Lahore. of Major Smith, (1847), P.175.

when nothing could have saved the exhausted British. Instead there were divided counsels. The honest amongst them had either not recognised the advantage they had gained, or were powerless; on the other hand, there were the traitors who overtly desired nothing less than the victory of the Khalsa. This led to stormy counsels, bitter words, all cohesion vanished, and along with it hopes of victory.

After the battle of Ferozeshah, Tej Singh went to the British camp and had an interview with the Governor General. There, he is said to have promised to bring about the occupation of Lahore by the British troops. (Normally, it happens during training exercises that the chief umpires often go over to the other side for consultation with the officer directing the exercise.)

During one month's lull that followed the battle of Ferozeshah, the British were in no position to resume the offensive until reinforced with fresh troops, guns and ammunition. Practically all ammunition had been expended, and the troops were exhausted. Tej Singh, very much in the know of this state of affairs, failed to take advantage of the situation. How could he (a traitor) do anything to embarrass the British! Another chance to beat the enemy was thus lost, the nearly won battle was lost, victory was turned into defeat, because "on the sikh side there were commanders undoubtedly brave, but possessing neither that moral courage which alone can command success, nor that confidence in the prospects of their cause which is so great an incentive to victory; while the honest purpose of some of

them was at least open to imputation."<sup>12</sup> J. N. Sarkar has appropriately remarked that, "the officers were the weakest element in the Sikh army, so that, in their struggle with the English the Khalsa proved an army of lions led by asses."<sup>13</sup> Tej Singh was no exception. Lamenting on the lack of efficient, loyal and vigorous leadership on the Panjab side, Shah Muhammad, the famous Panjabi poet, wrote thus :

Shah Muhammada ik Sarkar bajon,

Faujan jit ke ant nu harian ne.

(O, Shah Muhammad, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's absence cost the Panjab Army its victory when it was in their grasp.)

### III THE BATTLE OF ALIWAL

#### Ranjodh Singh Crosses the Satluj

Ranjodh Singh, the youngest son of S. Dey Singh Majithia, also held high rank in the army of Ranjit Singh. He was of the loyal group at the Lahore Darbar and he had fought against the British during the first Anglo-Sikh war. Before the commencement of the war, a force under Ranjodh Singh had been placed at Phillour as a precautionary measure, and also to watch the enemy movements at Ludhiana.

After the battle of Ferozeshah; the British did not have enough guns, ammunition and men to enable them to resume further operations ; hence for the time being there was inactivity on their **part**. This emboldened the Sikhs,

12 The first and second Sikh wars, Britain, P. 17.

13 Fall of the Mughal empire, vol iii, P. 309, In.

and, on 17th January 1846, **Ranjodh Singh** with 10,000 men and 70 guns crossed the **Satluj** at phillour, and took up position at a place called Baranhara, seven miles from Ludhiana, and occupied the forts at Farehgarh, Baddowal and Gangrana ten miles south of Baddowal. Thus he not only threatened Ludhiana but was also able to cut off the enemy's lines of communication between Ludhiana and Ferozepore. But, strangely, he did not attack the city of Ludhiana which was lightly defended.

On learning about these movements of **Ranjodh Singh**, the British sent Sir Harry Smith at the head of a Strong force composed of four regiments of infantry, three regiments of cavalry and eighteen guns, to the relief of Ludhiana. the garrison commander at Ludhiana was also ordered to advance and meet Sir Harry Smith at Baddowal. Meanwhile, **Ranjodh Singh** had moved from Baranhara to Baddowal. Sir Harry Smith finding the direct route to Ludhiana blocked decided to make a detour, leaving Baddowal on his left. On 21st January, **Ranjodh Singh** attacked the relieving column and captured almost all the enemy baggage and also made some white prisoners. However, the relieving column less its baggage reached Ludhiana.

So far, these were the bold and energetic moves on the part of the Sikh commander. He had captured a number of fortresses and was able to cut off Ludhiana. Having done all this, one wonders as to why **Ranjodh Singh** failed to carry home the advantage he possessed and attack Ludhiana which was held lightly and could have been easily captured. Here he showed lack of enterprise.

Sir Harry Smith paying tribute to Ranjodh Singh's tactics at Boddowal wrote in his autobiography : "It is the most scientific move made during the war and had he known to profit by the position he had so judiciously occupied he would have obtained wonderful success. He should have attacked me with the vigour his French tutors have displayed and destroyed me, for his force compared to mine was over-whelming ; then turned about upon the troops at Ludhiana, beaten them and sacked and burnt the city..."

Even a laymen like Shah Muhammad felt likewise ; he writes :

"Shah Muhammada Singh je zor karde,  
Bhanwen Ludhiana tadon mar lainde."

(Had the Sikhs then pressed forward, they could have captured Ludhiana.)

The victory over Sir Harry Smith's relieving force had produced encouraging results for the Sikhs and had demoralized the enemy, Cunningham writes :

"Ludhiana was relieved, but an unsuccessful skirmish added to the belief so pleasing to the prostrate princes of India that the dreaded army of their foreign masters had at last been foiled by the skill and valour of the disciples of Gobind, the kindred children of their own soil. The British sepoy's glanced furtively at one another, or looked towards the east, their home ; and the brows of Englishmen themselves grew darker as they thought of struggles rather than triumphs. The Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief trembled for the safety of

that siege train and convoy of ammunition, so necessary to the efficiency of an army which they had launched in haste against aggressors and received back shattered by the shock of opposing arms. The leader of the beaten brigades saw before him a tarnished name after the labours of a life, nor was he met by many encouraging hopes of rapid retribution. The Sikhs on their side were correspondingly elated; the presence of European prisoners added to their triumph: Lal Singh and Tej Singh shrank within themselves with fear, and Gulab Singh, who had been spontaneously hailed as minister and leader, began to think that the Khalsa was really formidable to one far greater than himself, and he arrived at Lahore on the 27th January, to give unity and vigour to the counsels of the Sikhs.”<sup>14</sup>

### **The Battle**

Notwithstanding the advantages gained, Ranjodh Singh, on 22nd January, left Biddowal and took up position in the form of a semi-circle on the left bank of the Satluj at the Talwan ford near the village of Aliwal about fifteen miles west of Ludhiana. The position occupied by Ranjodh Singh was a low lying area not good from a defender's point of view. Moreover, they had their backs to the river, and defeat here meant destruction. He had also collected a number of boats; most probably he was more worried about the crossing places than of any offensive. Sir Harry Smith who had received reinforcements immediately occupied the position abandoned by the Sikhs

On 28th January, Sir Harry Smith at the head of eleven

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14. History of the Sikhs, Cunningham, pp. 274-275.

thousand men marched towards the Sikhs to given them battle. A fierce battle commenced, the Sikh guns took heavy toll of the attackers : both sides fought gallantly : the Sikhs, elated with their recent victory, and the enemy to avenge their defeat. Ranjodh Singh leaving the brave Sikh gunners behind, himself fled across the river in confusion. Although, Ranjodh Singh was the first to fly and basely quit the field, the brave Sikhs did not lose their courage. Again they rallied and made one last and vigorous effort. They fought like men who had all at stake, but were eventually defeated : and whatever was left of their force withdrew to the west of the Satluj.

By this defeat all the advantages gained at Baddowal, such as the confidence established in the Lahore troops and the demoralisation of the enemy, were all brought to naught.

On the conclusion of the First Anglo-Sikh war, Ranjodh Singh was one of the signatories to the various treaties concluded between the British and Lahore, and also appointed one of the members of the Council of Regency.

But, after the Second Anglo-Sikh war, he was imprisoned and all his jagirs were confiscated. Latter, he was released and given an annuity of Rs. 2,500.

Ranjodh Singh, though not a brave or a capable general, was not a traitor. He was, writes Griffin, "if anything, superior to the other leaders of the Sikh Army, if leaders they can be called." He had no confidential agents in the British Camp as Raja Lal Singh had, nor did he, like



the Raja, pray for and labour for the triumph of the English.

#### **IV-THE BATTLE OF SABRAON**

After the battle of Ferozeshah, the British had received a further reinforcement of 10,000 men from Meerut ; this force reached Sabraon on 12th January 1846. Meanwhile, the Sikhs had constructed a bridge of boats over the Satluj, recrossed it with 30,000 men and 70 guns (they had left their reserves on the west of the Satluj), and entrenched themselves near, Sabraon "a movement, unparalleled in the history of war from time immemorial." The British proved incapable of opposing the river crossing by the Sikhs. Thereafter skirmishes were the order of the day till the real mighty and decisive battle was joined on 10th February. Tej Singh knew the day the British were to launch their attack, but failed to take advantage of this information. Naturally, he was not interested in victory for the Panjab Army. Instead he wanted to see it defeated.

On hearing the defeat of the Sikh army at Ferozeshah, Maharani Jind kaur, who had heard that Sham Singh was present at Attari, sent for him. When he presented himself before the Queen, she exhorted him to fight for his country and nation. She reminded him of the late Maharaja-the Lion of the Panjab. The Sardar, in spite of his disagreement with the policies of the Darbar, and not to be taken as a coward, decided to comply with her wishes and proceeded to the field of battle, pledging by Guru Granth Sahib never to return alive unless victorious.

#### **Treachery of Tej Singh**

On arrival at the battle-field, he realised the

treacherous game being played by Tej Singh and Lal Singh. They did not leave it there. On the night preceding the battle of Sabraon, Tej Singh urged Sham Singh to accompany him in flight on the first attack of the British. The Sardar rejected this proposal; on this the angry Tej Singh remarked tauntingly: "If you are so brave you had better take an oath on it, for I believe you will come with me after all." The traitor, an upstart, who had come out in search of fortune, had failed to understand the Sardar; the latter, once again renewed his vow not to leave the battle field unless he was victorious: the grey-headed Sham Singh let all know his resolution to die fighting the enemies of his race, and so to offer himself up as a sacrifice of propitiation to the spirit of his great Guru and to the "genius of mystic communionwealth."<sup>15</sup> On the proud day (10th February) of the battle of Sabraon, hoary-headed Sardar Sham Singh, the faithful friend of the the Khalsa, remembering his vow, dressed in a garment as white as his long snowy beard, galloped forward: cheering his ardent followers, and reviving their spirits with the promise of everlasting bliss made to the brave by thier great Guru he led them to the attack.<sup>16</sup> He, thus, set a noble example which had the desired effect on the Sikh army.

On the battle-field of Sabraon, Sham Singh was on the left of the defensive position, Tej Singh in the centre and the right was weakly held by **Ghorcharas** and 200 **zamburaks**. The ground being sandy, it was difficult to build parapets. All this information had already been faithfully passed on to

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15. History of the Sikhs Gunningham, P. 281.

16. History of Panjab, syad Mahammed latif, P. 547.

the enemy camp through the good-offices of Tej Singh, the Commander-in-Chief, and his lackies. The result was obvious, The British attacked the Sikh right flank. This was followed by the other troops deployed in line in their centre and right. All the British guns, motars, and howitzers, and the rocket battery were unable to silence the Sikh guns, which were deployed behind well constructed batteries of earth, planks, and fascines; neither were they able to dislodge the Sikhs covered either by redoubts or epaulements or within a treble line of trenches. The fire of the Sikh artillery, musketry and zamburaks was so great that it seemed impossible for the enemy to carry the entrenchments. The enemy's first attack was repulsed. The British renewed their attack; this also was repulsed. It was followed by another unsuccessful attack by the British. Thus three successive British attacks were repulsed. The Sikhs did not run, but fought to the last with their swords. At last they were overwhelmed by the forces directed by capable & honest officers. Tej Singh, with the reserves under him, once again let the events take their own course-signs of an incapable commander. Under similar circumstances, a soldier worth his salt would not have let such an opportunity go by, but would have bounced upon the enemy like a hungry tiger. Tej Singh did nothing to control the situation.

He acted differently. At daybreak, when the British army was entangled in the entrenchments, Tej Singh should have fallen upon the enemy; an action the true and loyal men serving under him had urged him to take and thus

carry home the advantage. But he was neither true nor loyal; his only aim was the destruction of the Sikh army. So, he waited till Lal Singh's army's had been put to flight, till the British had time to reform themselves : the British had expended all their ammunition and were unable to answer him with a single shot. Tej Singh opened artillery fire on the British, but there was no response from the enemy. At this moment when victory was in grasp, Tej Singh, instead of continuing the contest like a true commander, behaved like a traitor and turning his horse fled towards the Satluj. Having safely placed himself on the western bank of Satluj, he had the boat bridge over the river destroyed thus leaving the retreating army no passage over it. This resulted into a large number of the Lahore troops getting drowned in the river and many butchered by the British army.

Macgregor's version that it was Sham Singh who had removed the boats from the bridge, thereby cutting off retreat, and obliging them to stand to their arms, does not hold water. Because, according to W. Edwards, a civilian attached to the Governor-General and having knowledge of the secret documents, the bridge of boats was broken on the orders from Tej Singh and Lal Singh by previous consent with the British.

#### **Sham Singh's valour**

When the right wing was nearly mauled and Tej Singh absconded across the river leaving the flank to fight it out, the enemy concentrated all their efforts against Sham Singh. But all seemed to be lost; when there was no hope for victory,

the Sardar, who was neither a mercenary nor an upstart, knew it was a struggle for national survival, a struggle for death or life. He had come there to fight for the cause, to defend his country, his nation, and to keep the good name of the Lion of the Panjab, the son of a selfless father-Nihal Singh, who had sacrificed his own life for the sake of his king, who was not prepared to be branded a coward or a traitor, exhorted the Khalsa to follow their glorious traditions of bravery and sacrifice. He rallied the Sikhs ; onwards they rushed, death and destruction following them.

During the first part of the battle, the Sardar, mounted on his white, mare, was everywhere present, rejoining the broken ranks of his soldiers and urging them on to fight like patriots, as true sons of the khalsa, to die rather than turn their backs on the enemy. Bosworth Smith writes : "One old chief whose name should be recorded-Sham Singh 'among the faithless only faithful found' clothed in white and devoting himself to death, like Decius of old, called on those around him to strike for God and the Guru and dealing death everywhere rushed manfully upon his own." It was not till he had realised that the battle was lost that he spurred onward against the 50th British Regiment brandishing his glittering sword and calling on a few chosen followers to join him in the charge. They were, however, flung back to the river by the overwhelming force arrayed against them. Saam Singh fell back from his horse but not till he had wrought deadly havoc in the ranks of his opponents, and had received bullets in his own body. Thus fighting thus encouraging his comrades and awakening them to a

sense of their duty, thus scorning death to the last, did this veteran soldier fall a martyr, and his memory is held in the greatest esteem by his countrymen even to-day <sup>17</sup> The result of Sham Singh's glorious example of fortitude was that "Never perhaps was so obstinate a contest carried on to the end; never before was such cohesion displayed in the ranks of the Khalsa Army. Compelled to retire, they gave way in such admirable order as to excite the admiration of the British soldiers."<sup>18</sup> Writes Murray: Never before had the British arms been opposed to such determined bravery and skill, as strove with them on that bloody plain. The deadly struggle which had hung disgrace for a time on the British banners in the passes of Afghanistan, owed their fatal terrors to the natural character of the country, far more than to the bravery of its hardy but undisciplined forces. But here they were withstood on a fair field by a foe that listened unappalled to the thunders of their cannon, and stood unmoved before the glittering points of their bayonets when led to the charge."<sup>19</sup>

As in the earlier battles; here to, the men fought gallantly and did everything they could. But their leaders, who were at the helm of the affairs did nothing except

17. "The heroic death of Piccolomini so poetically conceived by Schiller is scarcely more sublime than that of this Sikh chieftain determined not to behold the disgrace of his country." (Stulpnagel, *The Sikhs*. P. 44.)
18. *Rulers of India*, Viscount Hardinge, P. 118.
19. *British India and its Races*, PP. 720-721.

betraying both their men and their cause. The battle of Sabraon turned into the Sikh Waterloo; it witnessed the basest form of treachery on the part of the opportunists. Otherwise, had the British been defeated here, the consequences for them would have been disastrous; who knows they might have even lost India.

When the battle was over, Sham Singh's servants swam across the Satluj, to recover his remains. The British granted the permission to search for the dead body. The body of the old Sardar conspicuous by his white dress and long white beard, was discovered where the dead lay thickest. It was taken across the river on a raft to his native place, Attari, where it was cremated. The Sardar's wife, on hearing the news of his death, attired herself in the clothes which the Sardar had worn on his wedding day and was about to immolate herself when the news of the Sardar's dead body being brought to Attari reached her. She waited for the dead hero's return, and the next day, alongwith the Sardar, she offered herself to the fire. Later, a **smadh** was built on this spot, which is well maintained by the descendents of the late General. Every year the occasion is celebrated at the **Smadh** when an Akhand path is conducted, kirtan is recited, his deeds are recalled, lectures on his life are delivered and **Guru ka langer** is served.

Sardar Sham Singh was very well connected with the reigning family and had a very high status in the Lahore Darbar. When Sir Alexander Burnes reached near Lahore, Sham Singh was one of the courtiers who were detailed to

go out and receive him, Sham Singh was present during the 1831 Ropar meeting between the King of the Panjab and William Bentick, the Governor General of India. When Prince Kharak Singh went to the English camp for a return call, Sham Singh accompanied the Prince.

It 1831, the dependencies of Chutala and Khem Karan were leased out to Sham Singh for Rs. 8,000 and Rs. 5,000 respectively to meet the expenses of arms, ammunition and gun powder. On 7th March 1837 he celebrated his daughter's marriage to Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh which, it is believed, cost the Sardar over fifteen lakhs of rupees. (Besides gifts to the various members of the marriage party, the main items of the dowry given to his daughter were: 11 elephants, 101 camels; 101 horses, 101 cows, 101 buffaloes, 500 Kashmiri shawls.)

Sardar Sham Singh was one of the best representatives of the jat race, which for manliness, honesty, strength and courage, is second to no race in the world." His death was a great loss, for there was no one to take his place at least not among the intriguing Sardars at the Court. According to the same authority, "Had there been more chiefs like him, the Satluj campaign would have never been undertaken, and the Sikh nation would have preserved the independence which it madly threw away." we can also add here that, even if the Satluj campaign was undertaken, as it actually did happen, and had there been more chiefs like Sham Singh, the outcome of the campaign would have been different. There is every indication that the results would have been ; defeat for the British arms



and victory for the Panjabi army. under these circumstances the subsequent history of the Panjab, nay the history of the whole of the Indian sub-continent, would have been different. But, there were no such leaders: the result was : defeat of the Panjabi army and the establishment of the British foot-hold in the Lahore Darbar, later followed by the annexation of the Panjab to the British Indian dominion.

Fuller writes: "The presence of a general especially in the face of danger, at once establishes confidence, for his personality is fused into the impersonal crowd, and the higher his self-control the higher does this confidence grow-it magnetises his men and morally re-unifies them." This can be so aptly said in the case of Sham Singh. Though he came late at the scene of the battle, he was there, everywhere, exhorting his troops to fight the enemy. He must have said to his troops : "We will fight the enemy; we will fight to the last man; we shall never surrender."

Sardar Sham Singh was not in favour of waging this war. But, once it had been waged he was all out to see it through victorious. (20) He was a man of unshakable virtue

20. "It takes more courage to stand against the herd for an ideal that one believes to be right than to go with it. One may recognize that a number of those who put forward conscientious grounds for objecting to military service were probably moved in part from a shrinking from physical danger: even so, in avowing their objections they showed less cowardice than the far greater number who, supporting war with their voices, watched it from a safe distance in a 'sheltered occupation'. (Thought on war, Liddell Hart, P. 87.)

who would not accept defeat. He was a man of determination, having once made a resolution he would not falter. This is so very evident from the vow he had taken to fight on until he was victorious: he gave his life for the cause and did not listen to Tej Singh's base suggestions to escape with him.

John F. Kennedy one time President of the U.S.A has written in his book, **Profiles in Courage** that "To be courageous requires no exceptional qualifications, no magic formula, no special combination of time, place and circumstance. It is an opportunity that sooner or later is presented to us all. Politics merely furnishes one arena which imposes special tests of courage. In whatever may be the sacrifices he faces if he follows his conscience-the loss of his friends, his fortune, his contentment, even the esteem of his fellow men-each man must decide for himself the course he will follow." Sardar Sham Singh was a man of courage-both moral and physical. He was offered an opportunity, and he did not miss it. In the final test he followed his conscience irrespective of the personal consequences. We, again, quote the late Kennedy, according to whom "The courage of life is often a less dramatic spectacle than the courage of a final moment ; but it is no less a magnificent mixture of triumph and tragedy. A man does what he must-in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures and that is the basis of all human morality."

He Sham Singh was a clear-headed person; he was brave and a straight-forward man who did not believe in the machina-

ations of the intriguing chiefs. He set personal example to his subordinates ; he inspired them and rallied them around him in the last bit for victory in the Battle of Sabraon. His gallantry, his guts, his uprightness all add to his glory. He was a noble Sikh Chief and "one of the noblest and best of the Sikhs." He was a man of self-reliance, a quality as rare as genius. He was a great soldier with aggressive spirit. "He was," writes Macgregor, "an old and a brave soldier, one of those who had fought under Ranjit Singh during his warlike career. He was a fine fellow and a great favourite with the Maharaja..... He determined to sustain his character to the last, and did all in his power to stop the flight of the Sikhs at Sabraon until he fell in the struggle."<sup>1</sup> He died nobly in battle as a brave and gallant soldier. Whereas the battle of Sarbraon is a saga of Tej Singh's treachery, it is also a fete of valour and of magnificent courage on the part of Sham Singh.

As regards his loyalty to the cause, to his country, to his nation there can be no doubt. It was unique. He did all he could in spite of the personal consequences ; danger to his life clearly looming before his eyes did not deter him. His actions speak for his patriotism which was of a very high order. He was a self-less man and he sacrificed everything he had for his nation, for his country. He remained unaffected by the ocean of treachery that surrounded him. Indeed he proved himself "a prince among patriots". But, on the termination of the First

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21. History of the Sikhs, Mee Grosn, Vol. II, P. 194.

Anglo-Sikh war, the traitor Tej Singh who had then become a wazir, rewarded the Sardar's services by confiscating his jagirs worth Rs. 1,59,300.

### **The Gunners**

During this war, the gunners, such as General Ilahi Bakhsh, General Sultan Muhammed khan, and his son, Colonel Sultan Ahmad Ali fought against the British with great zeal and spirit. On the conclusion of the war, Lahore Darbar had to part with a large number of guns. It was a pathetic scene at Lahore when the guns were being handed over to the British. ,‘when gun after gun,” writes an eyewitness, “was being delivered up, the sight was too much for Sultan Mahmood (Sultan Muhammad), the commandant of Artillery. He Shed tears of pity and chagrin, deploring at the same time his downfall.”<sup>22</sup> After this, Sultan, Muhammad khan was sent to Hazara where he remained until 1848, when he along with his son was sent to Derajat.

During the Second Anglo-Sikh war, General Ilahi Bakhsh is alleged to have failed to support the Attariwala Sardars in their fight against the British. On the other hand, Sultan Muhammad Khan<sup>23</sup> and his son both had fought

22. Ibid., II, 223-224

23. This family which served the Lahore Darbar as gunners for three generations was connected to the famous Panjabi poet Shah Muhammad. The latter has written in beautiful Panjabi verse, in nutshell, a history of the First Anglo-Sikh war, which he calls as the Indo-Panjab war (Hind Panjab da Jang). These verses are very popular among the Panjabis who know these by heart.

against the British with the same zeal. The result was that on the conclusion of the second war, both the father and son were removed from the service and all their jagirs were resumed. Sultan Muhammad was given a life pension of Rs. 600. He died in 1859, and his son settled down in Bhairawal in Amritsar District.

General Sultan Muhammed knan was a good gunner, was always respected by the Maharaja for his capabilities. He was of intemperate habits and fond of his drink. His drunkenness had brought him often into trouble with Ranjit Singh, who, out of regard for the General's capabilities, had excused the latter a number of times. It was only because of his heavy drinking that the General was relieved of the appointment of the officer-in-charge, Ordnance Department. He was loyal to the Lahore Darbar and ever remained so.

Ilahi Bakhsh was a capable general and, after Mian Ghausia, the best artillery officer produced by the Lahore army. He was a skillful swordsman, good at sports and an expert horseman. During the meetings between the Maharaja and the Governor General that took place at Ropar in October, 1831, reciprocal visits to each other's camp were undertaken. During the Governor General's visit to the Maharaja's camp various sports, feats of horsemanship and skill in sword-exercises were displayed by the latter's generals. Ilahi Bakhsh was one of those who displayed his skill in a befitting manner.

The Maharaja, as with the others, had bestowed jagirs

and awarded valuable gifts also to General Ilahi Bakhsh. On the first of every month the Maharaja used to perform *sankalp* and give presents to all, high and low. Ilahi Bakhsh, also, whenever present at the occasion, used to be one of the recipients of these valuable presents.

### **The treaty of Lahore**

The peace treaty, known as the Treaty of Lahore, was signed on 9th March 1846; on behalf of the Lahore Darbar, it was signed by persons like Tej Singh and Lal Singh, who, in the words of Sir Claude Wade, were "ready instruments of our policy" and "the betrayers of their country were not representing the nation." The other signatories of the Lahore Darbar included, Bhai Ram Singh, Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala, Sardar Ranjodh Singh Majithia, Diwan Dina Nath and Faquir Nur-ud-din.

Although defeated, the army was still feared by persons like Tej Singh, who thought only of themselves, and not at all of their country or of the child Maharaja in whose name they exercised authority. They pressed upon the British Government a policy of the kind which has ever proved, sooner or later, fatal to the native Government which has adopted it. They wanted the British arms to protect them, and, their request that a British force should remain at Lahore till the last day of December 1846, was granted on 11th March 1846, through the Supplementary Articles to the First Treaty concluded only two days earlier. Before this term expired, they again requested that the British force should remain at Lahore till the Maharaja should attain the age of sixteen. This request,

also, was accepted and a fresh treaty was concluded on 16th December 1846. On behalf of the Lahore Darbar this Treaty was signed by fifty-two principal Sardars of the Panjab including the signatories of the first treaty.

Another outcome of the second Treaty was that a Council of Regency to administer the Panjab during the infancy of Maharaja Dalip Singh was constituted at Lahore. The Council consisted of S. Tej Singh, S. Sher Singh attariwala, Diwan Dina Nath, Faquir Aziz-ud-din, S. Ranjodh Singh Majithia, Bhai Nidhan Singh, S. Attar Singh Kalianwala and S. Shamsheer Singh Sandhanwalia. Tej Singh, as a reward for his treachery, was placed at the head of the Council of Regency, given the title of "Raja", and was also confirmed in the appointment of Commander-in-Chief of the Sikh army. In August next year, Tej Singh was given in jagir, Sialkot with its fort and the adjacent villages with the annual income of Rs. 28,000.

Tej Singh was hostile towards Maharani Jind Kaur. When the Maharani's name was proposed as head of the administration, Tej Singh was one of those who vehemently opposed it. On the other hand, he proposed that the guardianship of the State, till the Maharaja came of age, should be taken over by the British Government. Consequently, the Treaty of Bhairawal was signed on 10th December, 1846, wherein it was agreed that the country be ruled by a council of eight under the British resident who became the real ruler; Tej Singh was one of the eight councillors. Tej Singh and his saviours could not tolerate the presence of Maharani Jind Kaur at Lahore. She was

therefore, on the instigation of traitors like Tej Singh, removed from Lahore to Shekhupura.

### Lehna Singh Majithia

After the treaty of Lahore in 1846, the Darbar territory was divided into four parts each under a judge. Lehna Singh Majithia who was a wise and liberal administrator was put in charge of Majha including Kasur. He was an acute diplomat, and was, during the Maharaja's time, deputed on many a diplomatic assignment.

He was known for his ability, knowledge of astronomy and mathematics; he was the scientific brain of the Lahore Darbar. Burnes, who visited Lahore in July 1831, was impressed with Lehna Singh's scientific knowledge, and presented him with a thermometer. He spoke many languages.

Though wise, he was coward and superstitious. He was not brave enough to face danger, and at the approach of danger, he would run away to Hardwar to bathe or to Banaras to feed a crowd of hungry Brahmans. After the death of the Maharaja, in order to escape the political responsibilities, Lehna Singh<sup>24</sup> ran away to Banaras, when he should have served the country for which he had the ability and knowledge. Posterity can never forgive him for

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24. Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia, the famous philanthropist of the Panjab, founder of **the Tribune**, Dayal Singh Public Library and Dayal Singh college all at Lahore, was Lehna Singh's son. On the partition of the Panjab, The Tribune was first shifted to Ambala and thence to Chandigarh, and the College to Karnal.



this.<sup>25</sup> Had he with his reputation and administrative talent taken the lead in 1845 in the Panjab, the great troubles which came upon the country might have been averted. But he did not prove to be a true patriot. He did not understand that the religion of a statesman, and indeed of every honest man, is to stand by his country in times of danger; to share her griefs and, if need be, fall with her fall. Brady has correctly remarked: "The wealthy and prosperous every where are not always ardent patriots. When civil life impends or rebellion is threatened they sometimes have a tendency to compromise or remain inactive."<sup>26</sup>

### Taj Singh

By now, Raja Gulab Singh had been given the territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Lal Singh had been banished. Tej Singh, seeing the field free, reared ambitions to become a ruler. He, therefore, offered the British a sum of rupees twenty five lakhs for a piece of the Sikh territory to rule over. But, he was disappointed. However, when, after the Second Anglo-Sikh War, the Panjab was annexed, Tej Singh and a few other nobles who promised to give loyal assistance to the British were allowed to retain their **jagirs**.

During the Second Sikh War, Tej Singh fought against  
25. Shah Muhammad writes: "Lehna Singh Sardar Majithia si Wada aqal da kot kamal mian. Shah Mohammad tur gaya tirthan nu, Sabhe chhad ke dang dawal mian" (S. Lehna Singh Majithia though was a very intelligent person, but leaving the Darbar disputes, himself went away on pilgrimage).

26. Caesar's Gallic Campaigns, Brady, P. 111.

Raja Chattar Singh and his son Raja Sher Singh, the relatives of Maharani Jind Kaur, as he did not want the Maharani to come to power. He could not go against his protectors, the British, because Tej Singh was perhaps the only Chief in the country who was "tolerably contented". He was very wealthy, he had been created Raja and President of the Council, and was raised high above the whole Sikh aristocracy. A revolution could only injure him. So, on the annexation of Punjab's Tej Singh jagirs worth Rs. 92,779, were confirmed.

During the 1857 mutiny Tej Singh rendered help to the British. In 1861, his scattered jagirs were consolidated in the area of Batala when he became the Raja of Batala. He died at Lahore on 2nd December 1862.

Thus, Tej Singh is a striking study in treachery. According to Gardner, a European in the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, "Two more contemptible poltroons than the two generals of the Khalsa army-Lal Singh and Tej Singh both Brahmans-never breathed." During January 1841, when Prince Sher Singh had besieged the fort of Lahore, Tej Singh was one of its defenders. Here also he behaved as a quisling. "The treachery of Tej Singh," writes Gardner, "was so conspicuously and pointedly base, he having prayed us to leave the gates of the upper fort open for Sardars, that we all swore to a man to kill him if fate put him in our way." Such was the character of this untruthful and unscrupulous man that even the troops had no faith in his leadership, and suspected his fidelity. The army cried to Tej Singh; "Do not betray!" The troops told him, that he and Lal Singh were playing the part of not only of

traitors to their country, but of ruthless butchers and murderers. During the battles he always kept himself at the apex of the army (in the rear), pretending that he could thus have an eye on the whole front and that it was not his duty to go in front. And at the "apex" he sat in a bomb proof mud hut. He had confidential agents in the British camp, and, with Lal Singh, did pray and labour for the triumph of the British. After the defeat in the first Anglo-Sikh war, he became entirely subservient to the British Resident, Major H. Lawrence, and threw to the winds all the national interests.

The First Anglo-Sikh war is the history of Tej Singh's treachery. The British inferiority in numbers was more than made up by the treason of this Poorbia brahman, At Ferozeshah, writes Malleson, "victory for the Sikhs—a victory twice within grasp—would have meant to the English the loss of India." But, India was saved for the British by the treachery of one person—Tej Singh. "His strange conduct," writes Smith, "in ordering a retreat before the wearied and almost defenceless British force at Ferozeshah, on the morning of the 22nd December, is inexplicable on any other suspicion than that of treachery." He was loyal to neither the country nor the Panjabi nation; neither to the profession of arms nor to his outfit; neither to his superiors nor to his comrades and subordinates; and, as writes General Bradley (U. S.), "on this factor alone battles are won or lost." Hence he was the major cause of the Lahore Army's defeat and the consequent downfall of the Panjab kingdom. It sounds ridiculous, when arguing in

his favour, Lepel Griffin says that the army had become "unruly". People like him probably ignore the fact that it is the Comander-in Chief who is responsible for maintaining discipline in the army, which in this case, Tej Singh had failed to do. This clearly indicates his incapacity to control the army. On the other hand, had the Lahore army won the war and the British been defeated, who would have got the credit for it ? the answer is ; the Commander-in-Chief. Under such circumstances, he wouldn't have showered all the laurels on the army ; nor would he, ashamed of his unworthy actions, have hid himself somewhere.

An upstart, Tej Singh had risen high in the Lahore Darbar because of his uncle Jamadar Khushal Singh, the Lord Chamberlain. His rise was due more to his fortune than his capabilities. He lacked vigour and courage ; the British Commander-in-Chief who fought against Tej Singh branded him as "faint hearted". He had no stomach for fighting. He was a coward and timid person. He had no interest in the cause he was fighting for, So naturally he showed lack of enthusiasm. He was not a straight forward person ; he was an intriguer. He took the army to a war he had not prepared them for. He lacked both "wise theory" and character, "the union" of which constitutes a great general. But Tej Singh was no great a general. He was mediocre. Dr. Ganda Singh sum up his character in these words :

"He was not a son of the Panjab ; he was neither loyal to her nor to his masters. He was a foreign adventurer. With his home and near relations in the British dominions at Ekri the pargannak of Sardhana, in

Meerut district, he easily became a tool in the hands of the British. A mere soldier of fortune, he was ready to do anything for the glittering gold. He entered into correspondence both with George Broadfoot, the agent at Ludhiana, and Peter Nicholson, his Assistant at Ferozepore, and kept them informed of the movements at Lahore. It was due to his planned treachery that the British escaped a disaster at Ferozeshahr and were able to win the final victory at Sabraon."<sup>27</sup>

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27. Private correspondence Relating to The Anglo-Sikh wars, (edited) Ganda Singh, Introduction, P. 70.

## About Ourselves

Guru Nank Dev Mission came in to being in the year 1963 with the sole aim of imparting the message of Sikh Gurus to general public. and aspecially to the people of younger generation. For this end in view it provides reading material in the form of booklets, everymonth, in Punjabi, English and Hindi.

The Mission is a non-profit organisation. None of its workers or executive members is a paid employee. Accordingly the booklets are made available for free distribution at mere cost price. Members of the Mission get these free of charge.

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Secretary

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